

EdReach Newsletter - Week of November 2, 2007

Spring Valley High senior to receive President's Volunteer Service Award

President George W. Bush will present the President's Volunteer Service Award to 17-year-old Graham Van Schaik when Bush arrives in Columbia on Friday, according to a White House news release. To read more, visit:
<http://ed.sc.gov/news/more.cfm?articleID=860>

Workshop planned to help groups that hope to start charter schools*

The South Carolina Department of Education will conduct a free workshop on Nov. 7 for persons or groups interested in applying to open charter schools. The meeting will cover topics related to both the charter school and grant application processes. To read more, visit:
<http://ed.sc.gov/news/more.cfm?articleID=855>

Message from Jim Rex

Dear Friends:

Earlier this week, we released the percentages of South Carolina public schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. Our state's 2007 AYP results were similar to last year's.*As a whole, we made 26 of our 37 goals.*

NCLB requires schools and districts to break out their performance data into a number of student "subcategories" that include ethnicity, special education, poverty, and limited ability with English. It's an "all-or-nothing" rating system in which schools must make all of their AYP targets or face sanctions.*Falling short on even one target means that a school will not meet AYP.

Palmetto State educators are working harder than ever, and I commend them for their efforts to meet the federal goals.*I caution the public, however, that schools should not be labeled as "failing" if they don't meet all of their AYP goals.*If you've got 21 targets and you meet 20, you haven't failed.*You have to look at each school's data in depth before you can make a determination of how it performed.*

Each state sets its own definition for academic proficiency under NCLB, and independent national research studies have shown that South Carolina's definition is far more rigorous than other states.*Several reports, including one by the conservative Fordham Institute, rated South Carolina, Massachusetts and California as the nation's toughest graders.*Students who score Proficient in many states would score at Basic or Below Basic levels in South Carolina.*

While South Carolina's test score goals, like those of other states, are rising at breakneck speed in order to meet NCLB's requirement of 50 percent proficiency by 2014, I'm afraid that next year AYP results will be significantly lower even if student test scores improve dramatically.*That's because 2008 achievement goals for elementary and middle school students will increase by more than 50 percent.

NCLB focuses on serving all children - particularly minority students, children with limited English ability and children with learning disabilities.*That's commendable.*But if the law isn't revised, nearly all of the nation's schools will eventually face federal sanctions.*

I have shared my concerns about NCLB with other state superintendents and with South Carolina's Congressional delegation.*I've told them that the federal law's goals need to be ambitious but obtainable, and its data have to be comparable across states.*Without those two things, I'm afraid the law will lose all credibility with the public and become irrelevant - or worse, a hindrance.*

Here in South Carolina, our local educators are focused on improving student achievement, and I'm confident that we can do that.*

At the state level, we are working on a new accountability system that will allow us to test in ways that contribute to student learning rather than drain large chunks of time from classroom instruction and that will help us report results in a way that everyone can understand.

By tempering bureaucracy with common sense, I believe that real reform can begin to take shape.*Our young people will be the greatest beneficiaries.*

Sincerely,*

Jim Rex

State Superintendent of Education*

To read the AYP report, visit:

<http://ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores/ayp/2007/default.cfm>*

To learn more about NCLB, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb>*

To read the Fordham report:

<http://www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/publication.cfm?id=376>*

Rex On The Road:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/superintendent/Rex-on-The-Road-Schedule.html>

In The News:

<http://ed.sc.gov/news/>

On The Air:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/On-The-Air.html>*

Dates to Remember:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/Dates-to-Remember.html>

Resources for Teachers:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/Resources-for-Teachers.html>

Resources for Students:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/Resources-for-Students.html>*

Resources for Administrators:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/Resources-for-School-Administrators.html>*

What Others Are Saying:

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/publicinformation/Education-RelatedEditorialOpinion.html>

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